



## **12. SAN ANTONIO PANEC COMMUNITY**

### **Santa Cruz, Alta Verapaz**



*View of San Antonio Panec Community*

#### ***History of the Community***

The 75 families living in San Antonio Panec have their origin in Pueblo Viejo, San Cristobal municipality in the department of Alta Verapaz. The population's eviction and expulsion started in 1979 due to the construction of the Chixoy dam and the reservoir's flooding.

The Guatemalan government, the National Institute of Electrification (INDE), and the financing agency the World Bank, were the responsible institutions for the plan and process for the community's resettlement.

Between 1979 and 1983, 15 families from the community were displaced at a level 150 meters above the river. Being an emergency eviction, the majority of families lost cattle, birds, dogs, and personal objects. They had to build houses with "standing sticks" and palm leaf roofs. The San Cristobal firefighters gave them some food, but it was never sufficient for the community's needs.



Due to the fear of massacres and persecutions like those which occurred in the neighboring municipality of Rabinal, some families moved to the village of Panquix. According to the Commission for Historical Clarification, “Ten communities in the area were destroyed: Rio Negro, Los Encuentros, La Laguna, Agua Fria, Comalmapa, Jocotales, Chitucan, Los Mangales, Pacaal, and Hacienda Chitucan. The purpose was to destroy all the neighboring communities to the Chixoy basin.”

In March 1982, unknown people pursued INDE worker Filiberto Pocasangre from the El Rosario farm to the del Cid Crossing and kidnapped him. At that moment, the official documents signed by INDE and the community disappeared. These written documents stated the resettlement terms and promises which INDE had made to the community. Neither Mr. Pocasangre nor the documents ever reappeared. Mr. Felix Alonso Raymundo, vice-president of the Pueblo Viejo community, was witness to the pursuit of Mr. Pocasangre and saw how he was taken from the vehicle in which he traveled.

The community does not remember all the promises that INDE made. They only remember some of them: quality land, good cement block houses and potable water for all the families, a donated farm for lumber, latrines, drains, and free electricity in the homes, compensation for their losses and a vehicle for transport and product marketing. The Pueblo Viejo population accepted the resettlement terms offered by the Human Resettlement Office of the National Institution of Electric Energy (INDE). They trusted that these promises would be fulfilled.

Due to the increase in water level, in 1983 the second eviction of the community occurred. INDE took them to the San Jose Chituzul farm where they lived until 1986, when the community was finally “provisionally” transferred to San Antonio Panec. The move was done in a truck. INDEP supported by paying two-weeks work to the 34 resettled families so they could build *bahareque* houses in San Jose Chituzul.

Seventy-five families currently live in the community. Thirty-three were included in the INDE census and 42 are new families (the sons and daughters of the evicted families).



*The INDE built houses are deteriorating. Mr. Santos Sucup's house.*



*The few latrines built with INDE support are in terrible shape. Mr. Rodrigo Sucup's latrine.*



The vast majority of the INDE offers were not granted:

### **Housing**

INDE built 34 *bahareque* houses in San Antonio Panec. COGAT donated the aluminum sheeting for the roofs.

- Currently, five families via their own efforts have been able to improve their housing and have cement block houses.
- Twenty-nine families continue living in very deteriorated houses. They do not have minimum living conditions.
- INDE employee Dr. Gaitan showed the community housing designs so that people could choose what they most liked. They never received the promised cement block houses.
- The Peace Fund (FONAPAZ) supported the community with 25 cement block houses. However the houses were left half-built (with the walls half-completed, without a roof, doors and windows). The change of government in 2000 did not allow this project to continue. Currently, some families with great effort have been able to finish building their houses.
- Of the 34 latrines built with INDE support, currently only 10 work, albeit in terrible shape. INDE only provided the base and the toilet bowl.

### **Water**

- INDE built two *pilas* that currently are not in use.
- The community bought a water source for Q1,500 (one thousand five-hundred quetzals). The COGAT institution supported building the tank and the pipes for family distribution.
- As the owner of the water source did not give a property title, he sold the rights to the water source to two villages: the Najquitob community and the Valparaiso farm. These communities destroyed the water tank to build a new one. The system is currently shared between three communities. The community does not have a property title to the water source.
- The committee is in charge of the system's maintenance and repairs. Currently there are three families that do not have water because they cannot even pay for the pipes.
- There is a water shortage in the summer. Some families are left without service. Five of these families share a well built by their own effort. Some families carry water from a low flowing and possibly contaminated river. Some families go to their neighbors' houses where some water is available.



*The pila built by INDE was not useful.*



*Five families share a well during the summer months when water is scarce.*



*In the summer, six families have to carry water from the river.*



### **Land**

- Before the reservoir's flooding, the Pueblo Viejo community had 3 *caballerias* of communal land. This is now sunk beneath the dam.
- The community planted on the riverbank's fertile plains. All of the families had sufficient land to harvest corn, beans, tomatoes, vegetables and fruit. There was also grass for cattle. The land did not need fertilizer and produced two harvests annually.
- INDE gave titles of two *manzanas* for each of the 34 affected families. Furthermore, they gave four community work areas for each family. The community does not have property titles for this communal land
- With families' growth, the land has become too small. The 42 "new" families have been able to build their housing in the communal lands and with community permission. These lands must be legalized.
- The land has also become too small for the community's productive needs. There is not sufficient space to harvest.
- Even though they produce two annual harvests, there is also need to buy chemical fertilizer and fungicides for production. In the summer, the corn is very small.

### **Electricity**

- The community's own effort and the municipality's support led to electricity installation in the village. INDE never fulfilled this promise.
- Before the service was privatized, people paid INDE between Q8 (eight quetzals) and Q14 (fourteen quetzals) monthly. After DEORSA took over, people started to pay Q30 (thirty quetzals) or Q40 (forty quetzals). Currently some families pay Q80 (eighty quetzals) or Q90 (ninety quetzals) monthly. Because of this, some families have been left without electricity since they cannot pay.
- DEORSA provides bad service. Electricity consumption is estimated. Sometimes they charge for electricity that one has not used. Sometimes they do not send the bills. It does not make a difference if one complains in town, since the same problems occur the following month.
- The cost of electricity prevents these resources to be used for food and family production.



*Dry cornfield: When there are no resources to purchase fertilizer, harvests are not possible on the land.*



*The price of electricity is too high. Herlinda Sucup, with a 30 day fine, must pay Q 225.*



*The stoves INDE provided for the houses are not well-built. They are deteriorating. Mr. Alfonso Hernandez's stove.*



*The community hall's roof is deteriorating. INDE did not fulfill its promises.*

### ***Other Promises***

- The stoves that INDE built for the houses are not in good condition.
- The community has a health clinic that INDE built, but it is very small and does not have medicines. The community's needs are not covered by this health clinic.
- INDE built the community school. When the latrine rotted, FONAPAZ supported with thick iron beams and sheets of metal. FONAPAZ also built a new school.
- INDE supported the building of the community hall whose roof is deteriorating.
- The street to access the community is in poor condition. This road does not receive maintenance.
- The community never received a vehicle for transportation or marketing, nor a farm for lumber, nor compensation for losses caused.
- Thanks to the community's efforts, it has managed to improve its infrastructure: a stove for the school, water and electricity, a Catholic church, some cement block houses, *pilas*, and stoves. Not all the families have been able to improve their infrastructure.

### ***The Effects of Eviction***

Before the dam's construction, the population was well adapted to their life in Pueblo Viejo. Although there was not much infrastructure, with the environment's resources the population could survive.

There were abundant and fertile lands, sufficient materials for building houses and ample spaces to take care of animals in Pueblo Viejo. People had fruit trees: *jocotes*, mangos, *chicos*, *anonas*, *zapotes*, and plantains, as well as medicinal plants and vegetables like sweet potato and *ayote*. Each family's harvest on the river bank allowed the population to purchase goods and fulfill their needs.

Life was not simple or easy, and limitations existed. There was a need to work hard and constantly. But life was pleasant for a population which acted according to its historic and cultural experience. During innumerable years of existence in the area, people worked the land.



The resettlement in different areas and the continuous displacement was a dramatic experience for the population and caused new challenges for their survival. Other effects of the eviction and the struggle to build a new life include the following:

- With the resettlement, the population did not obtain the results desired nor what INDE had promised. People were cheated, taken advantage of for their good will and illiteracy, as well as due to the fear of the region's different massacres and persecutions that occurred.
- Life resources were scarce in the new settlement: water, land, materials, soil quality, animals, and trees. There was a need to invest in fertilizers and fungicides. (The Pueblo Viejo community members had not even known about fungicides.) More money than before is invested for these and less in now produced. Previously there was a diversity in production; now only beans and corn can be harvested.
- Many of the resources on which the population's economic life was based disappeared in the resettlement: palm trees, fish, fruit trees, and animals. These resources were never substituted by others. These production spaces and marketing opportunities were closed without opening others. The spaces to transmit knowledge and experience (traditional professions and medicinal plants) from one generation to the next were closed without opening others.
- The population growth and the appearance of new families (the sons and daughters of the directly affected population), as well as the scarce amount of land available, closed off the community's opportunities for living and development. Each year the situation gets worse as the available resources decrease.
- Added to all these difficulties are the lack of employment and thus economic resources, the impossibility to attend adequately to health problems, and the specific problems of widows and single mothers.
- The lack of living conditions have led to some families returning to the village of Panquix in the upper part of the Chixoy river. They do not have property titles for these lands. Other families have emigrated outside the community.
- Economic and productive difficulties prevent families from providing a balanced diet. Currently, one has to pay for the consumption of fish, fruit, and vegetables.
- In the new settlement, the community's traditions and customs are slowly being lost. The culture itself is being lost.
- Mr. Macedonio Raymundo is blind. He worked in a company involved in the dam's construction, COGEFAR. This work led to his blindness. While he receives a small pension, it is insufficient for living. (It is based on the standards of 20 years ago.)
- In some aspects, there have been improvements like in access to certain services and infrastructure, electricity, and formal education. Some people have managed to become bus drivers, bricklayers, or work in topography or construction.



Due to his work on the dam, Mr. Macedonio Raymundo lost his vision. He receives a small pension.



Some families could not stand the conditions and returned to the river. View of the Panquix community.

### ***The Community's Achievements***

During all of these years of living in San Antonio Panec, the community has had to overcome all of the difficulties associated with the eviction and resettlement process. They have managed to survive in very difficult conditions. Due to the families' work, organization, and capacity for struggle, their achievements have allowed them to improve the population's quality of life. The following includes some of their achievements:

#### *Community resources:*

- Even though water, land and money to invest and produce are scarce, the community, with much work, has been able to harvest, sometimes collectively, some products, mainly corn and beans for self-consumption. The families help one another plants coffee, plantains, and vegetables when possible. The seeds for planting are taken from previous harvests.
- All of the families have hens. Some have pigs, ducks, or turkeys. Three families have cattle, which is very difficult since there is no land for them. It is Q100 (one hundred quetzals) for each head of cattle in a rented corral.
- There was a need to sell and clear the large oak and pine trees. There is still a small forest (each family has a *manzana*) that is used to gather wood and to build stoves, corrals, or hen pens. Although scarce, there are a few avocado and medlar trees.
- Some women help the family economy by making *huipiles* and other woven goods. The community also makes woven bags and goods from palm leaves like woven mats, brooms, or fans. Since they do not exist in the community, purchasing the palm leaves is a problem.
- In the community, there are bus drivers, bricklayers, and two people who have worked in topography. There is also a midwife and a health promoter. Felipe Nery Sucup made *atarrayas* by order, but he had an unfortunate accident and died.
- Community members have good knowledge about agriculture. They know how to plant corn, beans, and tomatoes. One person knows how to make organic fertilizer. Other people know how to do artisan work, making *huipiles*, woven bags, woven mats, and brooms.



- With his two cows, Mr. Alfonso Hernandez makes cream, cheese, and a ricotta-type cheese. He does not waste anything because the skimmed part of the milk is used to feed the animals.



*Mr. Modesto Xitumul Raymundo's bean field. The majority of the population plans corn and beans.*



*There is still a small forest for lumber.*



*Dionisia Sis Izaguirre, like other women, makes huipiles..*



*Mr. Alfonso Hernandez makes cream, cheese, and ricotta-type cheese.*



*Laura Marina Alba built this stone bench on her own.*



*The community's struggles and work has allowed them to improve infrastructure like the church and school.*

- Although many people with medicinal plant knowledge have died, there are always some very useful plants like verbena, horse tail, or pine. These can be used to cure malaria, stomachaches, kidney problems, and blood pressure.
- The majority of the families have radios and some have televisions.
- The community's organization and struggles have allowed some basic, although insufficient, infrastructure. There is a school, community hall, water system, electricity system, a Catholic church supported by the Tactic parish, a soccer field in poor condition, and a communal stove for the children's snacks. Some families have managed to have a good house, stove, and *pilas* to store water and wash.
- Recently, there is a new community improvement committee with the goal of fomenting more work and progress. Furthermore, there is a mothers' committee that is in charge of organizing the breakfasts for the boys and girls at the school. The cleaning committee is in charge of keeping the chapel clean and in good condition. The potable water committee makes sure the community does not lack water.

The support of some institutions has been achieved:

- The Social Investment Fund (FIS) donated equipment for the Health Center. However, this equipment was not sufficient. The clinic needs more modern furniture: a moveable stretcher, a display case, and two or more chairs.



- FONAPAZ helped with the construction of the school and bathrooms at the school.
- The municipality helped with a soccer field, a stove for community services, and student snacks for the children. After 8 years, the soccer field is unusable, mainly due to lack of drains. The Santa Cruz municipality donated funds for the installation of electricity service.
- The ALA project donated 200 hens to a group of 8 women. This project has not helped much since there are many expenses (food, vaccines, and more hens). In four years, only Q800 (eight-hundred quetzals) has been raised.
- The government supported with low-priced pesticides.
- The COGAT institution collaborated with the installation of live and irrigation ditch barriers. But the sown grass grew too quickly and invaded the cornfields. The community did not learn to properly maintain it. COGAT also helped with some tools, but they have deteriorated or been lost.



*Maria Virginia Picon is one of the women who participated in the ALA hen project.*



*FONAPAZ supported with the purchase of the school's stove.*

#### *Community life:*

- Life in the community starts early. Housewives work from 4 or 6 in the morning until 9 or 10 at night.
- The majority of men are day-workers or farmers. Some people leave to work in other villages (Najquitob, Pansinic, Chisac) in agricultural labors. They make Q20 (twenty quetzals) or Q25 (twenty-five quetzals) daily and in this way have money for their survival.
- The men also work gathering wood in nearby farms or doing work at home like building fences, hen houses, cleaning, and construction.
- The most common foods are eggs, beans, *tortillas* and herbs. The families feed themselves with the little that they produce.
- Few people have been able to find employment when companies have arrived in the departmental capital (Coban), which has been a great help to improve family life and housing.
- There is a health promoter and two midwives who greatly help the community. Mrs. Berta Paulina Hernandez managed to save the life of a girl who was born feet-first in October 2003. Mrs. Berta has conducted 35 or 40 trainings on how to use home-made remedies to deal with common illnesses (vomiting, diarrhea, fevers, and infections).



- The majority of the community's children have studied, although only finishing primary school. Families do not want their children to experience the same thing that their parents did. Only two teachers cover all the grades through sixth. The teacher Deysy Depaz is the pre-school and first-grade teacher. The teacher Edgar Enrique Leal teaches second through sixth grades. There are constant meetings between the parents and the teachers to follow-up on the school's achievements and needs.
- Three students have continued their studies at the middle-school in the town.
- In the community the Day of San Antonio de Padua is celebrated on June 13. In the first few years of resettlement, much food was made for those who went to mass, and at night-time, marimba music was played and people danced. It has been about two or three years since there has been marimba music or dancing.
- All Saint's Day in San Antonio Panec is celebrated with tamales and people go to the cemetery on Day of the Dead. Christmas is celebrated with *posadas* and tamales. On special occasions, there are parties. During holy week, people make bread with honey, fried *pacaya* and fish with an egg batter.
- The village tradition has different celebrations: the burning of the bull, Christmas Eve, the waxed pole, and the dance of the "moro" and the marimba.



*Lesbia Yolanda de la Cruz. Women in the community can work from 4 in the morning to 10 at night. They do not receive a salary for their work in the home.*



*Mr. Andres Rodriguez is a health promoter. The community has two midwives.*

*Community knowledge and experience:*

- Some people have good organizational experience and knowledge. The community's struggle and work have permitted improvements. It is very important that electricity was installed, in spite of INDE's lack of support.
- Even though there are not many institutions in the area, there have been productive, infrastructure, or food support projects.
- The community's eviction and displacement was very hard and difficult for a time. Nonetheless, the community managed to settle in a new place, and in spite of everything, survive.
- The community has experience in collective work. It has "*fainas*" or group work where people participate in community labors.



- Community members have much knowledge and know how to do different types of work. There are good experiences and knowledge about agriculture, medicinal plants, making artisan projects, domestic work, the prevention of health problems, and preparing food.

### ***The Problems and Needs of the Community***

It is true that the community, with much work and effort, has managed to have some achievements. Yet the families generally are not satisfied or in agreement with the settlement's conditions. Life is too hard.

The large majority of INDE's promises never were fulfilled. There are many problems and needs that affect the community. Some of these needs can be covered with the families' effort and work. But the large majority of them can only be solved with the support of State authorities, INDE, the World Bank, and the participation of other organizations and institutions.

The most felt problems and needs:

- Electricity: The community needs to solve the electricity problem. The service is bad and too expensive. INDEP agreed to provide free electricity. We are paying for electricity which is produced on our lost land.
- It is urgent that the potable water service be expanded. A new water source or expansion of the existing one, as well as a tank and pipes, are needed. In winter, many families do not have access to this service when it is necessary to water and diversify the crops.
- Housing: The houses built by INDE are falling down because they are made of dirt and fake wood. Due to their lack of resources, many families have not been able to improve their houses. They live in bad and dangerous conditions with this housing. Sheet metal, cement blocks, iron, cement and a foreman are needed.
- Economic alternatives for life: The community's families have a huge need to continue progressing. The economic problem is very serious. More land and resources investment for production and marketing is necessary.
- Health: The Health Center is in bad shape, poorly equipped, and does not function adequately. Medical days three times a year in the community are not sufficient. Furthermore, the majority of time, they only leave the prescription and we have to buy the medicine. There are not sufficient resources to buy medicine and cure the sickness which affect us. Those that get sick need to be taken to town, which is difficult due to the distance and lack of resources. We need a doctor or nurse to come two or three days a week to the community.
- The following properties still lack their regular legal status: San Antonio Panec communal lands and the right to the water source.
- In synthesis, INDE needs to comply with its promises. There is a need for a better life.



*The potable water service needs to be expanded. Water is scarce and does not come in sufficient amounts. Mr. Santo Sucup's water faucet.*



*Only some families have been able to improve their housing. Mr. Inocent Dubon was one of the people that benefited from the FONAPAZ program.*

*Resource needs:*

- There is a need for product diversification and technical development:
  - Establish mini-irrigation systems.
  - Produce pepper, tomato, cabbage, green beans, and cauliflower.
  - Have cattle pens.
  - Have a chicken farm.
  - Raise pigs.
  - Establish plant nurseries, produce fruit and wood trees (cypress, oak, orange, avocado, tangerines, medlar, and passion fruit).
  - Get financing for production.
- Two teachers are not enough for 70 or 80 boys and girls. One or two teachers more are needed. They need to be strict so that a good education is possible.
- The midwives do not have work materials. They need equipment to attend to the births: scale to weigh the children, sheets, towels, elastic gloves, and gauze.
- We need trained human resources in health, nursing (so that there is more than one health promoter in the community), weaving and embroidery, and diverse professions (mechanics, drivers, carpenters, brick layers). Community adults should receive training in the community.
- There is a need to improve work resources. The daily materials that men and women use are: seeds, bags, fungicides, fertilizers, animal food, sheet metal to build hen houses, tools for community work, and materials for weaving and embroidering.



*Midwife Dominga Gonzalez does not have equipment to facilitate her important work*



*The chapel, like other community buildings, needs to be repaired.*



*The community streets are in bad shape. They need to be repaired and have good drains installed.*

- There is a need to improve the community infrastructure:
  - Spare parts for the water system (faucets and pipes).
  - The main street is in bad condition. When it rains, the neighboring roads get muddy and slippery. There is a need to fix the streets and roads.
  - There is a need for wood-stoves. Some women cook on the ground.
  - The soccer field.
  - Make latrines for all the community (Needed materials: sheet metal, toilets, wood planks, walls, roofs).
  - Fence off the school and fix its floor, roof, doors, and windows. People from other communities come and tie their animals in the school passage-way.
  - The chapel is very small and does not have good doors, windows, or roof.
  - The community hall and kitchen need to be fixed up. The doors, roofs, and windows are in bad conditions.
  - The Health Clinic is very small and does not have good doors, windows, roof, or hallway. Medicine cannot be stored there. There is no moveable stretcher, nor tables or chairs. The Health Center needs to be enlarged and improved.
  - Drains and alternatives for garbage elimination (for example, building a tank where garbage can be burned).

*Problems of Community Life:*

- There is a need for work and employment.
- There is a need to better the community organization with:
  - Organizational training.
  - With committees providing more complete information to the community.
  - Have family due support the committee's travel.
  - Attendance at meetings.
  - Community support for their committees.



- At one time there were adult literacy classes, but they were suspended since the population did not attend.
- There is only one health promoter who does not have sufficient medicines. Training is needed for another person in the community to replace the promoter when he is absent.
- The widows, older women, and single mothers should be supported with food and other goods.
- The community history, old customs, and our culture must be recuperated. Financial support is needed to have celebrations like those in the past. We would like a community book to keep our history.

### ***The Community's Proposals***

- The community's principle proposal is to work and struggle for the fulfillment of INDE's promises, as well as find ways that the State, INDE, and the World Bank fulfill their responsibility to resettle the community and obtain a better life.
- The community wants to work alongside the other communities affected by the Chixoy dam for its rights. The community is willing to take the necessary measure to ensure the fulfillment of these promises.
- The community knows that it cannot solve all these huge needs by itself. It needs the support of the State, institutions, INDE, and the World Bank.
- The community is going to work so that INDE buy adequate land to settle the new families, in other words for the children of the people affected by the resettlement.
- The community wants the problems to be resolved with the participation of State institutions involved in each case:
  - The Education Ministry in the school and education problems.
  - The Health Ministry to improve health services and medicine provision.
  - The Ministry of Culture and Sports for the recuperation of history and culture.
  - The Social Investment Fund (FIS), the National Fund for Peace (FONAPAZ), the Social Secretary for the Environment, the Santa Cruz municipality, and other State institutions to support infrastructure, production, commercialization, reforestation, and implement training programs, etc.
- The community would like the support from Rights Action to continue and that it does not end. The community would like Rights Action to support with the community book and that it broaden its work according to the community needs. The community would also like the support of other NGOs, like CEPASHER.
- The community would like new institutions to support them. San Antonio Panec receives almost no institutional support.

### ***Credits***

This report is the result of the research conducted between October 2003 and March 2004 in the community of San Antonio Panec in the Santa Cruz municipality, Alta Verapaz.

Community researcher Roberto Bernardino Sucup participated in preparing this report. The researchers Jesus Irineo de la Cruz and Oliverio Sucup also participated. Juan Picon



narrated the community's history. Rolando Cuja and Iñaki Aguirre, on behalf of Rights Action, also participated in the report's preparation.

Furthermore, Andres Rodriguez, member of the Improvement Committee's Board of Directors, collaborated and participated in this study along with other community members.

This report is a complete summary of the community book written by the group of researchers. Although this book still is in the process of being completed, the information gathered here was available.

The information was gathered via interviews with individuals or the Committee's Board of Directors, some community assemblies, as well as through visits, conversations, and photographs.